

SUPPLEMENT

TO THE

NONCONFORMIST.

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LONDON: WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 1864.

[GRATIS.]

The Anniversaries.

THE LIBERATION SOCIETY.

COUNCIL MEETING.

The annual meetings of the Liberation Society were held in London on Thursday last. Unusual interest was attached to its proceedings on account of recent Church demonstrations against it, the most formidable of which was made at the meeting of the Church Institution, when the Archbishop of Canterbury took the chair, and was surrounded by the dignitaries of the Establishment. The Council assembled at two o'clock, at Radley's Hotel, and there was a good attendance. The chair was occupied by William Edwards, Esq., the treasurer, and among those present were the Rev. J. H. Hinton, E. Miall, Esq., Rev. J. Stent, Rev. A. M. Henderson, Rev. F. Stephens, Rev. W. Bean (Worthing), Rev. T. Arnold (Northampton), Rev. A. Mackennal (Surbiton), T. O. Turberville, Esq., W. Baines, Esq. (Leicester), Rev. J. G. Rogers (Ashton-under-Lyne), Rev. T. Penrose, Rev. W. Reed, Dr. E. B. Underhill, E. S. Robinson, Esq. (Bristol), O. Prentice, Esq. (Ipswich), R. Rumney, Esq. (Manchester), E. M. Richards, Esq. (Swansea), Rev. H. Crassweller, Rev. I. V. Mummery, W. Heaton, Esq., P. P. Perry, Esq. (Northampton), Rev. J. Birt (Weymouth), H. R. Ellington, Esq., Rev. C. Dukes, Rev. F. Trestrail, R. W. Boarer, Esq. (Folkestone), D. Pratt, Esq., Joseph Cooper, Esq., H. J. Preston, Esq., Stafford Allen, Esq., Rev. R. Ashton, J. S. Wright, Esq. (Birmingham), &c.

The CHAIRMAN, before calling upon the secretary to read the report, remarked, that it often happened that circumstances which seemed to check the accomplishment of certain objects, in the end proved to be material aids and assistances to them. He thought that in looking back upon the past year, they had no reason to regret any of its events, not even the minority of ten in which they were placed in the Church-rate division. The Executive Committee had looked at their position, and had come to the decision that it was not worth the time to attempt to influence the present House of Commons. They would now only watch measures, and devote their energies to out-door work. They had therefore called together their leading friends in different parts of the country, and with the conferences which resulted the Executive were exceedingly gratified. He expressed his own feeling, and he was sure the feeling of every member of the Committee, of thankfulness to Mr. Miall for the time and labour he had given in connection with their Conferences. (Hear, hear.) It had been thought with reference to the change in their own policy and the resistance of the Church that their financial position might perhaps suffer, but it was gratifying to be able to state that their income this year exceeded that of last year by 500*l*. (Cheers.)

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

Mr. J. CARVELL WILLIAMS then read the report of the Committee, from which we give some extracts:—

PARLIAMENTARY AND ELECTORAL ACTION.

The report stated that while the labours of the Executive Committee had during the past year been in no degree diminished, their Parliamentary operations would be found to occupy a less prominent place on the present occasion than in those of several former years. The earlier Parliamentary efforts of the Society had naturally aroused the supporters of Church Establishments, who had now committed themselves to a policy of indiscriminate resistance to all the measures which in any degree recognise the principles which it advocates. The readiness, it was added, of a strong political party to turn to account for its own purposes, this feeling of alarm, had made it easy, in such a House of Commons as the present, to defeat an independent party, possessing none of the appliances at the disposal of either a Government or an Opposition. The Society had therefore resolved

to appeal to the constituencies. The Committee were of opinion that the friends of Voluntaryism had been prone to attach more importance to party success than to the furtherance of their distinctive principles. They therefore thought that the preparations for the next general election should be based on some well-defined principle, the adoption of which should be made known in time to influence the electoral arrangements of the Liberal party.

Desiring to elicit the opinions of others on a point of so much practical importance, they convened in London, in last November, a conference of their principal supporters, both in town or country. District conferences were afterwards held at Bristol, Norwich, Halifax, Manchester, Leicester, and Plymouth; each one being numerously attended, earnest in spirit, and affording gratifying evidence of the undiminished vitality of the movement it was intended to advance.

These conferences, while not confining themselves to a single topic, but taking a general view of the Society's operations, discussed the electoral policy recommended by the Committee with a degree of care and of intelligence which greatly enhanced the value of the conclusion at which they ultimately, though not in all cases unanimously, arrived. As the result, the Committee believe that while, in the first instance, misconception existed as to their actual purpose, and some whose opinions they value regard the proposed policy with some degree of apprehension, the great majority of their supporters are convinced of its expediency, and will co-operate with them in adopting measures for giving it practical effect. . . . As preliminary to other proceedings, the committee have already compiled an electoral history of every constituency in the kingdom during the last thirty years; together with a statement of the votes of every member of the House of Commons on the principal ecclesiastical divisions of the present Parliament. They have also made some progress in the collection of such local information of a recent date as will enable them to afford any assistance which may be required by their friends in the several constituencies. It is to them that the committee must mainly look for the action which will be needed to ensure the success of the suggested electoral policy. That success can be realised by no centralised agency, unsupported by wisely-conceived and well-sustained local effort. It is in the constituencies that the struggle will have to be carried on, and it is with individual electors that the issue must ultimately rest.

THE IRISH CHURCH AND THE REGIUM DONUM.

While of opinion that their cause would be best served by their refraining for the present from initiating measures in Parliament, the Committee have not supposed that the great question in which they are interested would not, in some one or other of its phases, continue to engage the attention of the legislature. They have observed with much satisfaction that the debates on the Irish Church, occasioned by the motions of Mr. Dillwyn and Mr. Osborne last session, coupled with the facts revealed by the Irish census of 1861, have had a great effect in preparing the way for the revival of an agitation which, it cannot be doubted, will ultimately put an end to the greatest injustice which English legislation has inflicted on the Irish people. The Committee have reason to believe that protests against the continuance of this great wrong will not in future be confined, as they have been in recent times, to English Voluntaries. They are glad to find that during the present session there have already been presented to the House of Commons petitions signed by upwards of 30,000 persons, which ask, not that the revenues now possessed by the Church of a small minority may be shared by the Church of the majority, but that the Establishment may be utterly abolished, and that, with due regard to existing rights, its revenues may be appropriated to such purposes as Parliament in its wisdom may determine.

It is in connection with this movement that the Committee wish to call attention to the fact, that the Presbyterian ministers of Ireland are at the present time, with a pertinacity worthy of a better cause, endeavouring to obtain for themselves an additional 16,000*l*. a-year from the public funds, and also express a desire that the *Regium Donum* should, like the Maynooth Grant, become a charge on the Consolidated Fund, instead of depending on an annual vote of Parliament.

The public are already aware of the mischievous effect of this ecclesiastical grant on the Irish Presbyterian body, who, while constituting the wealthiest portion of the community, give to their ministers the most paltry stipends. It might, therefore, be supposed to be impossible that either the Government or the House of Commons should yield to a request preferred on grounds which would equally justify a Parliamentary vote for the relief of the ill-paid English clergy; but, in the present position of political parties, considerations of expediency may possibly induce the present, or a future, administration, to accede to even so unreasonable a demand. The Government has, it is true, declined to propose an increased vote in the estimates of this year; but a

deputation of Presbyterian ministers has lately visited the metropolis, and been actively engaged in canvassing both Liberal and Conservative members for their support, and, it is believed, has skillfully availed itself of the fears of the supporters of the Episcopal Establishment, to induce them to enter into a compact in defence of their mutual interests.

UNIVERSITY TESTS.

The committee attach great significance to the movement lately commenced by members of the University of Oxford, for the relaxation of the University Tests. Last session no fewer than 106 heads of colleges, professors, and fellows at Oxford presented to the House of Lords a petition having in view that object. They therein expressly admitted that "subscription to formularies of faith has failed to secure unanimity of religious sentiment, or even to promote religious peace in the University"; that "the requirement of subscription has a tendency to perplex the conscience, and leads to ambiguous interpretations of solemn obligations"; and, further, "that the University is in danger of losing the services of men of high character and ability by insisting on such subscription." And for those reasons they prayed "that requirement of subscription to formularies of faith as a qualification for academical degrees may be henceforth abolished." It was held that the present system of sectarian exclusiveness was as much calculated to lower the intellectual pretensions of the Universities as to injure those who had hitherto been the only sufferers. With this conviction Mr. Dodson's bill had been brought in, but it was to be expected that, at the next stage of the bill, its opponents would propose the insertion of a proviso which will exclude from Convocation Nonconformists who may obtain the Master of Arts degree.

CHURCH-RATES AND THE CHURCH-BUILDING ACT.

While the opponents of Church-rates do not intend again to ask the present Parliament to abolish the exaction, they feel bound to resist to the utmost the passing of any measure by which the Church-rate system is likely to be extended. That, in their opinion, will be the practical effect of the bill brought in by the Attorney-General last year, and again introduced in the present session, for the consolidation and amendment of the Church-building and New Parishes Acts. [The probable effect of the bill is described, and measures are being taken to amend it.] But there were other indications than that furnished by this measure that there no longer existed that desire for a termination of the Church-rate controversy which has frequently been professed by the opponents of Sir J. Trelawny's bill. On the contrary, they are concerting measures not only for obtaining rates in new parishes, but for restoring them where they have been abolished, as well as for rigorously enforcing them in the courts of law. Although, on many grounds, the Committee regret the probability that the parochial warfare will be continued and be carried on with increasing bitterness, they will cheerfully address themselves to the work which such a state of things involves. The Parliamentary return of last year shows, as previous returns have done, that the number of parishes in which Church-rates are not made continues to increase, while the practice of making, without enforcing the payment of, rates is on the increase also. Experience has also shown that the Church-rate agitation is of great value, as a means of furthering the ultimate aims of the Society.

THE UNITED PRESBYTERIANS AND THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

The committee have watched with interest the proceedings arising out of a proposal for a union between the United Presbyterians and the Free Church of Scotland. The proposal is one of which it is not within their province to express any opinion; but the discussion to which it has led has elicited facts which, as regards Scotland, have an important bearing on the work of the Society. It will be remembered that the originators of the United Presbyterian body, like Free Churchmen in more recent times, became seceders, not because of their objection to the interference of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, but because of their disapproval of the particular mode in which the civil power was exercised in the Establishment. But having grown in the knowledge, as well as in the practice, of the principles of Voluntaryism, there is now no body of Nonconformists who more firmly hold, as a principle, the Supreme Headship of Christ in His Church, or are more ready practically to apply that principle to the existing, or to any national establishment of religion. It affords gratification to English Voluntaries to find that, whether the projected union between the two bodies take place or not, the United Presbyterian are not likely to be induced by any considerations of expediency to refrain from uttering their protest against a system which they believe to be contrary to God's will, and injurious to Christ's Church. Nor is it less gratifying to observe, that the members of the Free Church of Scotland have not merely furnished splendid practical proofs of the power of Christian willinghood, but, taught by experience, have so nearly approximated in sentiment to

the views of their fellow seceders, that the existing difference of opinion is felt to be speculative rather than real; while the younger members of the body avow themselves to be converts to principles which a quarter of a century ago were rejected with aversion.

THE EDINBURGH CLERGY AND THE ANNUITY-TAX.

The committee were not surprised that the attempt to pay the stipends of the Edinburgh clergy out of the municipal taxes of the city had failed to satisfy those who sought the abolition of the Annuity-tax. They would have been surprised had it been otherwise. The attempt to enforce this rate has seriously threatened the peace of the city. The experience of the past does not justify an expectation that the ministers of religion at whose instance this great risk is incurred will feel it right to waive their unrighteous, though legal demands; but it may be assumed that the opponents of the Annuity-tax are now convinced that there is no room for further attempts at compromise, and that they will take care that, in the future choice of the representatives of the city in Parliament, and in dealing with any new Parliamentary proposal, they will display a degree of firmness which will secure for them a well-earned victory.

GENERAL OPERATIONS OF THE SOCIETY—PUBLICATIONS—INCOME.

Referring to the electoral operations of the Society the Committee stated that they had to congratulate themselves on the effectiveness of the district agency system, and to acknowledge their obligations to their agents, whose zeal and perseverance has in other as well as in pecuniary respects been of essential service to their cause. They are also glad to report that the efforts made during the past year to increase the circulation of the Society's publications have been attended with success; a larger amount of printed matter having been distributed than in any recent period. They, however, feel that the press must be still more freely used, if the advocates of Voluntaryism are fully to take advantage of their present opportunities. Their own ability in that respect is limited by the inadequacy of the funds at their disposal. The income for the year just closed has, indeed, exceeded by above 500*l.* that of the previous year; but the expenditure has increased also, and must continue to increase if the organisation is successfully to encounter the influences now arrayed against it.

RECENT EVENTS IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

It is believed that, gradually but surely, the conviction is spreading that matters pertaining to religious worship and instruction may be more fitly left to the several religious communities than be regulated by imperial legislation. But, far more rapidly is public opinion tending to the opinion, that, apart from all theories, the state of things which now prevails in the Church of England, in respect to both temporal and spiritual matters, is discreditable to the State and injurious to the Church.

But that neither the Church nor the State has yet formed a true conception of the spirit which should govern the affairs of a religious community, has been made painfully apparent by the praises so liberally bestowed by Episcopalianism on the Lord Chancellor for a measure which will extend the iniquitous traffic in advowsons, and add to the number of irresponsible patrons who, in the exercise of their legal rights, disregard the interests of congregations, and consult those of individuals alone.

It was left to the Committee of the Liberation Society—the supposed enemy of the Church of England—to petition Parliament, and to adopt measures for dividing the House of Commons against a measure so hurtful to the interests of that Church, and so repugnant to the principles of religion. They are, however, glad to find that even Churchmen are not prepared to welcome the Lord Chancellor's latest ecclesiastical measure, but consider it a return to one of the worst abuses of the Establishment to connect a Cathedral Canonry with a University Professorship, and thereby to revive the sinecurism of a past age.

The inquiry into the working of the Ecclesiastical Commission, conducted by the select committee of last year, confirmed the previously prevailing impression that the body created to reform the financial administration of the Church had failed to fulfil its mission, while it had wasted funds which were to have been expended for the relief of spiritual destitution. [The results of the appointment of the Commission are further referred to.]

The debate in the House of Lords last session, on a motion for a revision of the Burial Service, has made known the fact that even bishops of the Church are prepared to violate the law, rather than indiscriminately use a service the compulsory performance of which has been declared by above 4,000 of the Established clergy to be revolting to their consciences. In any other Church than an established church such declarations as those now referred to could scarcely have been made in vain. But in so heterogeneous a body as the English Establishment change in this matter is regarded as impossible; while the remedy suggested by a committee of Convocation, viz., the reservation of "godly discipline," but serves to call attention to the absolute helplessness of the Church in respect to one of the most important functions of a religious community.

It is because the Church of England is established by law, that its members have lately made the humiliating discovery that, while the members of other bodies may freely offer up their praises to the Almighty for all national meritorious, liberty of thanksgiving for the blessing of harvest is denied to them. It is for that reason that an increase of the Episcopate, proportionate to the growth of the population and of the Church itself, is attended with the most formidable difficulties. And it is for the same reason that one-half of the existing prelates of the English Church have been appointed by a single Minister of State, some of whose recent nominations to important ecclesiastical offices have been regarded with consternation by particular sections of the Church.

Referring to the Commission on Subscription, the report proceeds:—When the commissioners shall have accomplished their difficult task, it may be needful for those who are without, as well as those within, the pale of the Church, to give utterance to their sentiments on the legislative changes which may be proposed. But it is not too early to intimate that any alteration in the system of subscription which will allow the Established clergy to profess doctrines without holding them, and

to use formularies without approving of them, will meet with strenuous resistance from those who, while zealous for free thought and worship, object to give a legislative sanction to clerical dissembling, or clerical latitudinarianism.

THE "ESSAYS AND REVIEWS."

It is probably this last-named phase of the Establishment question which at the present time occasions the deepest anxiety to a large class, both in and out of the Church of England. That anxiety has been occasioned by the issue of the appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the case of the "Essays and Reviews," as well as by the fact that Dr. Colenso is still, by virtue of the royal letters patent, a bishop of the English Church; little hope being entertained that he will be judicially deprived of his episcopal office.

The gravity of the first of these events need not be insisted on, since it is admitted, with grief and alarm, by the great majority of Churchmen. Above 11,000 of the clergy have, indeed, united in declaring their own firm belief in the Church of England maintains without reserve the doctrines which the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council declare that the clergy may, without fear of penal consequences, impugn.

But no declarations of private opinion, however influential, will avail to alter the conclusions established by the recent proceedings. Those conclusions are—that clergymen of the Establishment may, with impunity, publish works declared by the Bishops, by Convocation, and by the great body of Churchmen, to be infidel in their tendency, and subversive of the authority of the Word of God—that the only legal standards of orthodoxy in the Church of England are its articles and formularies, as judicially construed by the legal tribunals; and that certain doctrines hitherto believed to be cardinal doctrines of the Church are legally placed in the category of open questions. It follows, that the Church Establishment in this country can no longer base its claims to support on its supreme regard for the Bible as a rule of faith, or on its guardianship of the truth, as explicitly set forth in its creeds and definitely taught by its clergy. The decision in this case, therefore, legalises, even more than did previous judicial decisions, the most conflicting religious teaching, and puts insuperable obstacles in the way of those who may wish by legal process to "banish strange and erroneous doctrine" from the Church.

Startling as are these results, there is at present no reason to suppose that they will not be accepted by the dignitaries and clergy of the Establishment. By substituting an impotent declaration for any thought of secession, or for any attempt to remodel the doctrinal standards of the Church, the clergy have apparently discovered a means by which they may retain their official positions, whatever events may in future mould the character, or influence the tendencies, of the Establishment. In addition, there is reason to fear that the union of hitherto antagonistic parties in such unavailing protests will still further serve to nourish a spirit of compromise, in place of that determination to sacrifice everything for truth which should characterise the spiritual leaders of the people.

These are events—the events of a single year in the history of the Church—calculated to make a deep impression on the minds of the English people in relation to the object aimed at by this organisation. They are events the effect of which cannot be counteracted by any combination in defence of the political rights and privileges of the Establishment—by any invectives aimed at the opponents of that institution—or even by unprecedented efforts to extend the religious influence of the Church. They can be neither ignored nor forgotten; while they suggest inferences which will tell with irresistible effect on thoughtful and God-fearing men. The Committee do not concur with those who believe that the system which they feel conscientiously bound to assail will fall by the weight of its own failures, or as the result of internal divisions, without any movement from without; but in the present condition of the Establishment they find a pledge of their own future success, and regard the influences now at work within its pale as powerful auxiliaries, without the aid of which they could not cherish their present hopes. They are, therefore, nothing daunted by the formation of counter-organisations, nor by the rallying of party politicians around a political Establishment. They have unshaken faith in their principles, as being based on sound reasoning, sanctioned by Divine authority, and confirmed by the teaching of human experience. They have never concealed from themselves that the day of triumph may be distant, but they are year by year increasingly assured of the certainty of its arrival. (Loud cheers.)

The TREASURER then read the financial statement for the past year. It showed a balance at the bankers, at the commencement of the year of 286*l.* 16*s.* 0*d.* Subscriptions and donations, 4,399*l.* 4*s.* 11*d.* Sale of publications, 59*l.* 18*s.* 4*d.* Total, 4,745*l.* 19*s.* 10*d.* The expenses, which were enumerated, had amounted to 4,473*l.* 9*s.* 2*d.*, leaving a balance of 271*l.* 9*s.* 8*d.*

The first resolution was proposed by Mr. J. D. SMITH, of Norwich, who expressed his hearty sympathy with the operations of the society:—

That the report of the Executive Committee now submitted be received and adopted; and that the Council expresses its approbation of the steps taken by the Executive Committee so to adapt the Society's operations to existing circumstances as to take advantage of unprecedented opportunities for influencing public opinion in favour of its views. That it regards with special gratification the successful character of the several district conferences lately convened by the Committee and the proofs which they have afforded of the continued attachment of the Society's friends, and of their determination to carry on its work with renewed energy.

The Rev. J. G. ROGERS, of Ashton-under-Lyne, seconded the resolution. He thoroughly agreed with the whole spirit and tone of the report. With regard to the electoral policy, he had at first been somewhat doubtful of its wisdom. He had been afraid that it would lead to a separation between the Nonconformists and the Liberal party, but he could now see that it would be wisely carried out. Sir Charles Wood had recently said in the debate on Mr. Newdegate's bill that the question must now be referred to the hustings. This was a challenge to them and if they were found wanting there would be an extension of their present evils. He wished it

were possible for the Committee to divert more of their funds to literary work. They (Dissenters) had little idea of the importance attached to the power of the press by their opponents, who were on all hands impregnating literature with misrepresentations of their history and character. With regard to the Privy Council judgment, it had for ever destroyed the pretension that the Establishment was for the defence of the truth. (Hear, hear.) He himself had heard a clergyman denounce the Essayists as possessed by the spirit of evil. The Established Church might have other ends to accomplish, but no man now could say that it was for the preservation of truth.

The Rev. S. CLARKSON, of Bocking, in supporting the resolution, said his sympathy with the Society was as great or greater than ever, and from his knowledge of Churchmen he believed they were becoming more than ever convinced that they could do without compulsion.

Mr. JOSEPH COOPER expressed himself deeply indebted to the Committee for their exertions, as described in the report.

Mr. J. CUNNINGTON objected to the manner in which Bishop Colenso and the Essayists and Reviewers were alluded to in the report. He was replied to by the Revs. T. Arnold, L. Duxsey, and F. Stephens, and by Mr. Wilkinson, and the report was adopted.

Mr. E. S. ROBINSON, of Bristol, moved—

That the Council approves of the decision of the Executive Committee to confine its Parliamentary action to defensive purposes during the remaining term of the existing Parliament. That, recognising the necessity for coupling with that determination early preparation for the approaching general election, the Council expresses its great satisfaction at the steps taken to secure the adoption of an electoral policy which will give greater prominence than heretofore to the principles of religious equality, and will insist on a due recognition of those principles, as a condition on which support will be afforded to Liberal candidates.

Mr. ROBINSON remarked that the more the electoral policy of the Society had been considered and discussed, the more it had been approved. The State-Church question was now constantly cropping up in Parliament, and they wanted representatives who would not merely vote for certain measures, but who would possess a clear and intelligent apprehension of the whole subject. It behoved them, therefore, to select such candidates as were well acquainted with ecclesiastical affairs. (Hear, hear.)

The Rev. WILLIAM REED (Wesleyan) expressed his opinion that the time had now come when they must have Liberal help for their measures, or no longer support unconditionally the Liberal party. He thought that owing partly to the attention which they had paid to the register, the Tories, at the next general election, would put the Liberals in a minority. After that they might again return Liberals, but with a new programme. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. MIALI explained that the Committee had not suspended their Parliamentary machinery; they had but refrained from initiating measures. The same vigilance with reference to bills before Parliament was exercised as before.

Mr. RUMNEY, of Manchester, remarked that the subject of the resolution had been fully discussed at Manchester, and the policy of the Committee approved. He suggested that means were wanted to bring their own electors together in the various constituencies, whenever elections took place. The resolution then passed.

The third resolution was moved by the Rev. J. H. HINTON, M.A. It approved the right of all classes in the community to share in the advantages, honours, and government of the national universities, without regard to sectarian distinctions. It alluded to the present tests as being prejudicial to the interests of learning, as well as unjust to Nonconformists, and trusted that the bill for the Abolition of Tests would be carried through the House of Commons in its integrity. Mr. Hinton said he moved the resolution as an old member of the Society, who wished to die in harness, and as an old Oxford boy who had had a taste of what Oxford bigotry was fifty years ago. (Cheers and laughter.)

The resolution was seconded by the Rev. A. M. HENDERSON and supported by Mr. MIALI, who said he knew that the question of university reform was interesting the minds of many Oxford and Cambridge men, whose views were far ahead of Mr. Dodson's bill, as well as of anything expressed in the debate of that bill. He thought that this was one of the most important movements of the day, and that if the universities could be detached from the Church, and made as they were in every other country in Europe, they would accomplish one of the greatest works of their day. This work, however, would not be left to them, but would be taken up in a systematic and organised manner by the members of the universities. (Cheers.)

The resolution was then adopted.

Mr. H. J. PRESTON moved a resolution relating to the Church-building Acts Consolidation Bill. It set forth that the Council was prepared vigorously to resist any extension of the Church-rate system by the authority of Parliament, and for that reason urged the necessity for the immediate adoption of measures to secure such an amendment of the bill now before Parliament as would give effect to the public declarations of the authors of those Acts, that they were not intended to authorise the levy of Church-rates for the maintenance of churches in newly created parishes. Mr. Preston stated the nature of the charge against the Attorney-General's bill, and related what was being done to oppose the measure.

Mr. PRATT said that if they remembered that this was the year 1864, it would seem to them extraordinary that such a measure as this should be

brought forward. (Hear, hear.) He thought they were indebted to the Committee of the Society for much assistance in opposing rates. If he were a Churchman he should hold up two hands for the abolition of Church-rates. If, however, they did not take care, these rates would now be enacted even in the old parishes where they had been abolished; for the division of the parishes under the Attorney-General's Bill, would in many instances, enable that to be effected. (Cheers.)

After some observations by Mr. BENNETT and Mr. ROBINSON,

Mr. CARVELL WILLIAMS stated what had taken place in the interview with the Attorney-General, and the impression it had produced on the deputation.

Mr. ELLINGTON and the Rev. I. BIRT, of Weymouth, briefly addressed the meeting on the same subject, and the resolution then passed.

Mr. ELLINGTON moved, and Mr. P. P. PERRY, of Northampton, seconded, a resolution approving of the appointments made to vacancies in the Executive Committee. Carried.

Mr. J. S. WRIGHT, of Birmingham, moved a vote of thanks to the chairman, not merely for his kindness that day, but for his long and assiduous services to the Society. (Cheers.) He believed that their treasurer was one of the most important stays of the organisation.

The Rev. B. NICHOLSON, of Plymouth, seconded the resolution, which was carried by acclamation, and having been acknowledged by the CHAIRMAN, the members of the Council adjourned to dinner.

THE ANNUAL SOIREE.

The Annual Soiree was held in the evening at Freemasons' Hall, and was attended by a larger company than has been present for years past. S. Morley, Esq., took the chair, and amongst those present were—H. O. Willis, Esq., Bristol; W. D. Willis, Esq., Bristol; R. Runnag, Esq., Manchester; Rev. Christopher Nevile, Rev. Dr. Edmond, Rev. E. White, Professor Newth, Rev. J. H. Hinton, Rev. A. Mackinnon, Rev. F. Trestrail, Rev. F. Stephens, Rev. A. M. Henderson, Rev. F. Tucker, Dr. E. B. Underhill, Rev. W. Bean, Rev. J. H. Ryland, Rev. W. Brook, H. J. Preston, Esq., Rev. R. Ashton, J. Haycroft, Esq., Rev. W. M. Statham, Rev. Dr. Davies, Rev. H. Crasswell, Rev. D. Nimmo, Rev. J. Guthrie, Rev. P. Hall, Dr. Ellis of Petersham; E. S. Robinson, Esq., Bristol; H. R. Ellington, Esq.; Rev. B. Nicholson, Bristol; E. S. Robinson, Esq., Bristol; W. Edwards, Esq.; Rev. W. H. Jones, Bridgwater; Rev. J. M. Stalker, Frome; P. P. Perry, Esq., Northampton; Rev. W. T. Henderson; J. D. Smith, Esq., Norwich; J. S. Wright, Esq., Birmingham, &c. There were also present several of the students of New College, the Regent's Park College, and the Hackney Theological Seminary, and some clergymen of the Established Church.

Mr. CARVELL WILLIAMS having presented a résumé of the Society's operations during the year,

The CHAIRMAN then said:—

I am here to-night because I believe the object we have in view is calculated to further the religious interests of the nation. (Hear, hear.) Surely at no former period has the condition of the Established Church furnished so many striking illustrations of the injurious tendency of relying upon legal machinery for the attainment of spiritual ends. Though aware of the political considerations that enter into this question, it is still a matter of amazement to me that Churchmen should be willing to seek to perpetuate the invidious distinctions that are caused by the existing system. I believe I speak in the interest of the Church itself when I say that I wonder they do not recognise the wisdom of co-officiating Dissenters by being forward to do them justice, seeing that the removal of their grievances is only a question of time. We have some of us been greatly abused because of the opinions we have expressed respecting Church property; but I still believe that Church property is national property. (Cheers.) In saying this, I would disclaim all wish to see property left for religious uses appropriated to any other than religious purposes. (Hear, hear.) But our main anxiety is to improve the spiritual condition of the Church. Of all the marvels that we meet with in the present day, surely none can be greater than that there should be found thousands of conscientious men within the pale of the Establishment who have signed the same Articles and engagements, and yet hold opinions the very antipodes of each other. (Hear, hear.) This is a state of things that I believe to be fearfully calculated to promote infidelity amongst the people—(cheers)—to destroy the Christian faith of the masses of our population; and surely the speedy end of a system tending to so disastrous an issue ought to be devoutly wished by every good man having at heart the best interests of his country. (Cheers.) It will be a blessed day for England that shall witness the removal of the hand of the law from that which is essentially spiritual. I believe there never was a time when earnest and devout men in the Church were more earnest and devout than now; but these men are obstructed in their work by the State Church system. [Mr. M. then referred to a letter of Dean Close, in the *Times*, to illustrate the way in which some Churchmen themselves are looking at the present heterogeneous state of things within the Establishment.] I may further advert to the testimony given this very week by Mr. Gladstone, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, at the meeting of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, who referred to the fact, when some twenty-four years ago a grant of 16,000*l.* a year was withdrawn by Parliament, equal to four-fifths of the entire income, many sincere friends of the Society were alarmed, believing it would not be able to recover the effect of that withdrawal; whereas, by voluntary efforts, its income has increased to be 80,000*l.* per annum. (Cheers.) It is to me very manifest that the approaching struggle will be between Christian life operating through the outgrowth of its own spirit, and Christian life operating by machinery provided by political laws; and of the issue of that conflict I have no doubt whatever. (Cheers.) It is an

essentially Christian work in which we are engaged. (Cheers.) With the Church separated from the State we shall hear no more of the now prevalent scandal of ministers of the same Church preaching Popery in one place, Evangelicism in a second, and positive infidelity in a third. (Hear, hear.) Let me say further, that the oppression caused by Church action in many of our parishes is deeply affecting; and those who are the objects of it demand our deepest sympathy. (Hear, hear.) Those of us who live in London or in the large towns little know what Dissenting ministers in the small towns and rural districts have to endure on account of this system, which is seeking to hamper and wrong them in every way and to crush out their life and liberty. (Cries of "Hear, hear.") This is the natural outgrowth of the institution against which we meet to protest; and I have confidence that some of us, at least, will live to see the day when the purposes we have in view shall be fully accomplished. (Loud cheers.)

The Rev. F. TUCKER then moved—

That, believing the existing relations between the Church and State to be injurious to both, as well as to the interests of religion, this meeting rejoices at the success of the Society's efforts to urge the question upon the attention of the public, and desires that the Society may be enabled to avail itself of the great opportunities now presented for the successful prosecution of its work.

This is the first time I have stood upon your platform. I cannot say that I am a new convert to your creed; but I may call myself a freshman in your college. I suppose you have no Articles for me to subscribe this evening; no oaths for me to take; but, perhaps, you will not object to listen to a confession of my faith. (Cheers.) I am here this evening as the friend and advocate of national religion. Understanding those words in their proper sense, they convey an idea which is to me most precious. A religion which shall be really national is about the most glorious thing that I expect to see this side heaven. We all desire to see religion—true religion—permeate this land. We want to see all our poor men rich in faith, and all our rich men poor in spirit. We want to see every merchant as pious as Thornton, every poet as Cowper, every senator as Wilberforce, and every peer as Shaftesbury. ("Hear, hear," and cheers.) More than that, we should like to see our premiers men of God, indeed; and all the acts of our government pure and lofty, without the slightest admixture of trickery or greed. But, in the first place, I say that National Establishments have never secured national religion. (Hear.) To do them justice, you must go back to the time when they had their full swing, unchecked by the heresies of these modern days—you must go back to the times of the Stuart dynasty, and who does not know what most religious and gracious Kings then sat upon the throne of England? (A laugh.) Who does not know how pure was the Court, how just the laws, how high the standard of morals throughout this realm of England? The Commonwealth, coming in between the two Charles's, is like a gleam of day between two railway tunnels—a gleam of day with the bright sun and the free air, and verdant banks on the right hand and on the left. But you have hardly time to draw a long breath of enjoyment before you are into the tunnel again—a tunnel deeper and darker than before, and where there are things that love the darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Those were the halcyon days of National Establishments, and if religion survived it all, who will deny that it is due mainly, under God, to those noble men who burst their way out of the Establishment, cast aside their golden fetters, and set a fearless witness for the right, the just, and the true. (Cheers.) I take it that those noble men have had their successors in every following age. And what would our beloved country have been without them? What would England have been in the last century without the Wesleys and Whitfields of that day? What would England be now? What would the Church of England be without that great body of Protestant Dissenters and free churches of faithful men that hem and guard it round? (Cheers.) An Establishment is essentially a thing of force; Religion is essentially a thing of love. (Cheers.) An Establishment has its rates and taxes, and summonses; Religion asks for the willing offerings of grateful hearts. At the back of an Establishment I see the magistrate, the policeman and the gaol—at the back of true religion I see only the glorious figure of Him who says, "Freely ye have received, freely give." I am speaking of the Christian religion—that which is properly called by that glorious name—I am not speaking of Mohammedanism—I am not speaking of any system of worldly pomp or ritual observance. Such systems may be propagated by the sword, and by the sword they may be maintained and upheld, but our Master is one who says, "My kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight," and then He adds these significant words—"They that take the sword shall perish by the sword." Once more, National Establishments have always stood in the way of national religion. They have made religion to be a mere thing of state policy, of state patronage, of state craft altogether; and thus it has become of the world, worldly, of the earth, earthy; a thing for the Auction Mart and for the Exchange. I may almost call as a witness this evening an honoured name that I cannot pronounce without feelings of the most cordial affection—I mean the name of Lord Shaftesbury. (Cheers.) It has been my privilege to stand by his side at many meetings of that Ragged-school Union of which he is the honoured president.

The speaker then referred to his lordship's depreciation of Government interference with ragged schools.

Not a word have I to say against the zealous labours of any good man within the pale of the Establishment. I have not a word to say against their lay agencies, Scripture-readers, home missions, and diocesan missions; but then those societies have nothing in them of the spirit of an Establishment, and would flourish with tenfold vigour if the Establishment were at an end tomorrow. Therefore, I say, up with the Church, but down with the Establishment. (Cheers.) Up with true religion, but down with persecution in the name of religion; up with every faithful teacher of the truth, but down with the auctioneer who sells the widow's spoons in order to pay Church-rates. (Cheers.) There has of late been a great revival of pure religion within the Establishment, and I rejoice in the fact. There has been a stirring among the dry bones within the last few years; the corpse at the bidding of a mighty voice has stood erect in the sepulchre and has begun to move, but I cannot conceal from myself the fact that it has about

it the grave-clothes still; it is bound and fettered, and when it strives to walk it stumbles and totters; and am I the friend or the foe of religion when I say, "Loose her and let her go?"

The Rev. Dr. EDMOND, in seconding the resolution, after some preliminary observations, said:—

I believe, from my heart that the Establishment of a Church is an injury, alike to the Church and to the State, and that this Society is really aiming at the liberation of brethren, which when the bond shall be snapped asunder they will themselves be ready to confess. We wish to cut the bonds with which their hands are bound, that they may fight by our side against the common foe. I believe the Liberation Society has reached a period in its history when two things are more than ever imperatively demanded of it. The first is that it shall be, as heretofore, faithful to its great principles, and not fail to publish them as wide as opportunity shall offer. The second, that it shall abstain from everything that might serve to mix up personal acrimony with the matters in debate. I am old enough to remember the ecclesiastical contest in the northern part of the kingdom, and I think I see the approach of a similar event in the southern part of the kingdom, though on a far grander scale. I remember that in that conflict there was much argument between the spiritual life awakened within the Scottish Establishment and the spiritual life working without the Establishment. The spiritual life within was for a time very jealous of the spiritual life beyond; and the spiritual life beyond was not, I think, altogether sufficiently disposed to acknowledge the worth of the spiritual life within. But by-and-bye this issue came—the spiritual life within would meet the spiritual life without, and it was then that the spiritually bound burst its bonds and became free. And I cannot but think that if Christian brethren without the pale of the Establishment will sympathise as far as possible with brethren within, and at the same time not fail to let them see the more excellent way in which God has guided us, the two may come together. This great national corporation is no longer, if ever it was, a united body. Nobody can now speak of the Church without naming a particular party in the Church, and I say if we are true to that section which is struggling after Christian life, we shall see the day—which would be a great day for England—when there will a grander disruption and exodus south of the Tweed, than took place at the north of it—dwarfing that indeed, into comparative insignificance. (Hear, hear.) The speaker proceeded to say that as a Presbyterian he deplored the fact that the Irish Presbyterians should have chosen the present time, of all times, to ask for another addition to the *Regium Donum*. To my brethren of the Irish Presbyterian Church—and some recent acquaintance with their doings makes me place them higher than I was wont to place them—I would say, as you love Protestantism don't fetter our hands when we wish to strike at the endowment of Popery by insisting upon the pitiful *Donum*. Fling it to the winds, for until Presbyterianism gets rid of its *Donum* Romanism will have its Maynooth. ("Hear," and cheers.)

The resolution was then carried unanimously.

The Rev. EDWARD WHITE moved the second resolution:—

That, as the Society's objects can be constitutionally effected only by the influence of public opinion, as expressed in the nation's choice of its Parliamentary representatives, this meeting deems it to be of essential importance that the friends of religious equality should prepare themselves for a general election, and should attach to their principles due importance in the exercise of the elective franchise.

He said:—

This resolution appears to have been framed for the especial benefit of the laggard friends of religious equality, and with a view to stir up their zeal against the approach of a general election. (Hear, hear.) Ah! there are, indeed, many who require to be so stirred up. If all the nominal Free Churchmen in England were practical friends of religious equality, the moral pressure brought to bear upon the legislature would be so mighty that the issues which we desire to see could not be long delayed. (Cheers.) But England is half full of wasted forces; and of no force is the waste more conspicuous than that of the political influence of religious men. (Hear, hear.) It cannot be expected that those whose minds are occupied with the elements of the religious life should devote much attention to public affairs; but there are multitudes of men in the Free Churches who are no longer so occupied, and for whose neglect of their social duties there is no available excuse. I cannot profess to feel much respect for such persons, especially when their abstention from political action arises from the notion that it will injure their spiritual life if they do their duty in relation to the commonwealth. (Cheers.) One feels tempted rather to remind such persons that the same inspired authority which exhorts us to put off the "old man" with his passions and lusts, exhorts us to put off, also, the "old woman" with her "fables." (Laughter and cheers.) But it would be a waste of time to attempt to persuade these "non-political" Christians to perform their duties, for it is generally found that when men cannot discover these obligations for themselves, they can seldom discover them by the assistance of others. (Hear, hear.) A more hopeful department of labour will be found among liberal members of the Establishment itself, and I think, Sir, that we ought to endeavour to increase the credit of this association among those religious men who are at present opposed to us. A Spanish polemic once exclaimed, when wearied and harassed by the repeated misconceptions of an adversary with whom he had been for some days engaged in theological disputation, "O, ye powers who preside over controversy, give me an opponent who understands me!" (Laughter and cheers.) Perhaps we do not always sufficiently strive to comprehend the opinions of our opponents, to place ourselves on their stand-point, so as to perceive what are the principal objections which they feel against our undertaking, and what are the arguments on which they chiefly rely in the defence of their position. It is, I fear, a fact that this association is far from popular with the members of the Established Church—that in diplomatic language they don't regard its operations with indifference, but indeed with undisguised hostility and apprehension. I ask myself the reason of this hostility, and I believe the reason to be that they are carefully trained by their own leaders to look upon it as revolutionary in its aims, perhaps in its means by which it seeks to accomplish them. Such is certainly the present opinion of the majority in

Parliament, of the majority of the upper classes, of the majority of the religious adherents of the Church of England. They imagine that we are seeking to introduce a new principle into our legislation, to set on foot a policy contrary to that which has governed the State during past ages; and, looking upon the union of Church and State as something resembling the union of soul and body, they think that the attempt to separate the two is equivalent to a homicidal assault upon the highest life of the nation. Now it will afford consolation to such persons to reflect that this notion is not founded on facts. (Cheers.) We have invented no new principle, we attempt no unheard-of or destructive policy. The association pursues a line of policy in direct continuation of that which has governed the legislation of England for two hundred years—a policy sanctioned by all the statesmanship and the experience of bygone days. The proof of this statement may be condensed into a few sentences. For the establishment of a church, it is proper to bear in mind, is not, as many suppose, a thing which can be comprehended in one short and concise definition, and which can exist only in one immutable form. It is something which admits of increase and diminution, which can exist in a perfect form of full development, or can dwindle until it becomes "small by degrees and beautifully less." A perfectly established church is one in which the Church and the State are so closely united, that while the State enjoys the supposed advantage of all the auxiliary religious authority of the Church, the Church on the other hand wields all the forces at the disposal of the State, to further her so-called religious ends. A Church is perfectly established when she can burn a man to ashes for not believing that she is the lineal representative of that Apostolic Church which was "gentle as a nurse" among the populations of primitive Christianity,—when she can hang a man for not believing in the first six general councils,—when she can chop off his head for not believing in the Royal supremacy,—or quarter him for not believing in the Convocation,—or clip his ears and slit his nose for not believing in the Archbishop of Canterbury,—or fine him fifty pounds for want of faith in a Book of Common Prayer,—or imprison him for venturing to go to a conventicle,—or seize his corn-ricks for denying the Divine origin of prelatial episcopacy,—or sell his chairs and tables in the market-place for contumacious resistance to a Church-rate,—or shut him out from all public employments for rejecting her authority to decree rites and ceremonies,—or finally put him in the pillory for daring to peep or mutter or move the wing when the King and the Parliament have determined the right way of salvation for an Englishman. (Loud applause.) That is a perfectly established Church: when the Church can wield all the authority, property, and prestige of the temporal power, for the support of her pretensions, and the destruction of her antagonists. Under the princes of the Houses of Tudor and Stuart, England enjoyed such a perfectly established Church, and, after a hundred years' experience of its working, the English people determined that they did not like it. They found such intolerance to be intolerable. Multitudes of them fled across the ocean to America, to escape from the King and the Bishops, there to found in the wilderness the settlements of freedom. The rest who stayed at home, driven at length to indignation and madness by the provoking, domineering, persecuting hierarchy, rose like a giant in a fury, and in the hurly-burly that ensued, the throne got upset along with the altar. But this is not to be attributed to the rebellious or destructive spirit of the English middle classes; but to the meddling, tyrannical spirit of the priesthood, engendered by the union of Church and State, a spirit which was certain, sooner or later, to lash into fury the sturdy commoners of a free state like England. These reformers of the Commonwealth, however, managed their affairs as clumsily as English reformers generally do, and through want of union among themselves they gave advantage to the adversaries of freedom, who thereupon returned at the Restoration of Charles II., and the old system was re-established upon a new lease and on new conditions. (Cheers.) The insurrection had borne its fruits. The Church was again set up in union with the State, not however this time to burn, and hang, and cut off the head, and clip the ears—but only to persecute by Acts of Uniformity and Five-Mile-Acts, to hunt and fine, and harry from city to city, such men as the author of the "Saint's Everlasting Rest," or the author of the treatise on "Delighting in God,"—only this time to torment by petty provocations and insults, almost out of their very lives, all who would not be conformable. (Hear, hear.) For thirty years the English nation submitted to this second régime of the Establishment, until this too was found to be insufferable. At length, therefore, men of all ranks, peers, bishops, and commoners, united in sending secret messages to the princely Garibaldi of that day, the Prince of Orange, who accordingly landed at Torbay, amidst the acclamations of rejoicing England, and before him fled the British Bourbon to his congenial refuge at Versailles. The Toleration Act now placed the Establishment upon a third trial, and subjected it to a new lease of power on a reduced principle. It could no longer burn, or hang, or chop off the head, or cut in pieces, or slit the nose; it could not even hunt and harry and fine and banish the unconformable. It could only secure the exclusion of Dissenters from municipalities and from Parliament, by Test and Corporation Acts. It could only enjoy the dear delight of tormenting the parishes of England by the levying of Church-rates; it was compelled to content itself with the exclusive enjoyment of the national ecclesiastical property, and generally with the pleasure of inflicting a social stigma upon those who were separate from its communion. For a hundred years the English nation endured the pressure of this modified Establishment. At length the great multiplication of the Nonconformists, their increasing wealth, intelligence, and social authority, gave them weight sufficient to demand the abolition of these unjust and degrading restrictions upon their citizenship. The force of argument and the spirit of justice at length prevailed: the Test and Corporation Acts were abolished. The licensing system fell into disuse. Fear of the Irish millions soon brought about also Catholic emancipation; the Reform Bill gave greater power to the middle classes; and since then the Church Establishment has subsisted in its fourth and final stage of authority and power. Now it can neither burn, nor hang, nor cut off your head, nor clip your ears, nor hurt, nor fine, nor imprison, nor banish, nor even exclude you from municipalities nor from Parliament. It enjoys now only the exclusive

use of the ancient ecclesiastical property of the nation, the right to torment the parishes with Church-rates, to seat its Bishops in the House of Lords, to present itself to the public as the religion of the Court and Parliament, to take cognisance of our wills, and generally to throw social disparagement upon those who secede from its communion. Well, is it not then true that when we demand the abolition of these last remainders of the Establishment system—when we demand that the national property shall be used for national purposes, or leased out to its present holders at a rental which shall acknowledge the national proprietorship—when we demand that the social stigma inflicted on the free churches by the political favour shown to a single religious community shall cease and determine—when we demand that there shall be religious equality before the law, and that the Bishops shall be sent about their proper business to their dioceses, we are pursuing a line of policy in direct continuation of that which has controlled the legislation of England during bygone centuries? (Cheers.) Legislation has been steadily dis-establishing the Church; and the more it has been dis-established, the more it has prospered, and the happier has England become in its freedom. (Cheers.) The remainder of this establishment system will have to come down, then, before long; and no earthly power can resist the influences which will achieve this consummation. Religious equality before the law is only one manifestation of a general law, and you might as well remonstrate with the tides of the Atlantic as they break upon the chalk cliffs of England, as attempt to resist the advance of this irresistible influence in the Europe of to-day. We trust to that force which has brought about all the great changes in modern legislation, which brought about the Reform Bill, the abolition of the Corn Laws, and every other improvement in this generation—the force of sound argument acting upon the reason of the English people. I wish to offer one such argument to the religious members of the English Establishment, an argument to my own mind of irresistible force. What is it that has formed the most respectable defence of this system? Is it not, that the support of the Church by the State has been the means of upholding the Christian religion, amidst the rivalries of the Roman Catholic nations, and the differing opinions of our domestic sectarianism—that it has furnished an unalterable confession of faith, amidst the ever-changing fancies of Dissent and infidelity. Well, this argument has at length broken down amidst circumstances of the greatest scandal. Religion consists of two parts, theology and morality. Formerly there was one intelligible theology, the old High-Church theology, consisting of a strange union between Genevan doctrine on justification and Popish sacramentalism: but now there are no less than three contradictory theologies established by law, the old High Church, the Evangelical, sanctioned by the Gorham decision, and that of the Broad Church Latitudinarians, established as legal by the recent decision of the Privy Council. The Bishop of Oxford declared in the late meeting of Convocation that the "power of the Church, as a Church, for protesting against forms of false doctrine was gone," if some device could not be found for superseding the decision of the Privy Council. The *Record* until very lately denounced as a "doctrine of devils," the sacramental theology of the High Church. Then on all sides we have evidence that the Establishment is stripped of its theological authority. There are no wide-spread and radical differences amongst us comparable to those which prevail among members of the Establishment; and thus the chief argument for its continuance is gone. The case is even worse when we turn to the morality which an Established Church is supposed to conserve. I will not venture to pronounce on the sincerity of any individual clergyman subscribing the formularies in any one of the three legalised senses of modern times; but I boldly challenge the attention of all religious members of the Church of England, that the Establishment which permits and provides for the signature of those formularies in their three contrary senses, is guilty of an offence against the laws of conscience and of God, which is to the last degree demoralising to the whole community. If you were to transfer the principles in the use of language which you have now sanctioned in the case of the teachers of religion, to the Exchange, the whole system of British credit would be exploded. Now when the Establishment furnishes the chief national example of trifling in the use of solemn words, you have lost your chief argument for its perpetuation. No resolve to fight for the temporalities will avail to ward off the attacks of an honest community demanding the abolition of such a spiritual scandal. (Cheers.) Perhaps the hierarchy, despite their internal differences on theology, and the scandals offered to religion by the system of subscription, which no removal of the clause on "unfeigned assent" will avail to remove, think that the prestige of their position will support them against the universal outcries of the English people.

After an allusion to the *Athenæum* and the *Quarterly Review*, the speaker concluded thus:—

I have thus shown that there is no foundation for the chief objection felt by Churchmen to the action of the Liberation Society, and also that their own most respectable argument for an Establishment has broken down. It remains only to urge upon them that the sacrifice demanded will not leave their Church in any danger of losing either sufficiency of earthly goods, or religious authority. Authority at present she has almost none. She is sinking under a load of obloquy and dishonour. Set her free, and the old Church of England, purged from latitudinarianism and Popery, may still prosper in days to come. This wealthy England will support her clergy and her worship in due affluence, and even in splendour. There would be more danger from the wealth that would flow in upon her, than from the poverty which she fears. But if she persists in resisting the just demands of the Free Churches, she will not the less be compelled to yield the day, but she will embitter her end by the maledictions of her contemporaries. (Cheers.) In the name of all that is sacred in integrity, and venerable in truthfulness, I conjure the devout members of the Church of England to assist us in promoting the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control. That issue will not be an era of injustice. Life interests will be considered. Voluntary contributions will be respected. The Church buildings even will be doubtless left in the hands of the Church of England; but the chief cause of internal dissent will have been taken utterly away. (Cheers.)

Mr. MIALI said,—

I do not think that the meetings of the Liberation Society will be charged with want of ardour. Those who adopt our principles and seek to give them practical effect are generally men who are in earnest, and when their spirits are stirred by such an address as we have just received from the last speaker, probably there is scarcely any demand which could be made upon you in the shape of self-sacrifice or work, which such a meeting as this would not be prepared for at the present moment. Much as we appreciate the evil influence of the support of religion by the machinery of law, I think there is scarcely a single individual present who is able thoroughly to realise the blighting and deteriorating and demoralising effect which the Establishment has upon the British community. I speak not simply with regard to religion, but in regard to the principles of morality upon which we act one with another, and especially upon those principles as they are carried out in social life. I believe that with regard to them there is a deadly miasma constantly rising out of this ecclesiastical system—not as a Church, but as an Establishment, of which because we are accustomed to breathe it, we fail to realise all its evil. The mere pain that is inflicted upon the minds of good and God-fearing men by those who are officially the representatives of the Established Church is almost the least part of the mischief which is perpetrated. (Hear, hear.) There is a misrepresentation of the spirit of the Gospel all over the land, blinding the population to the beauty, the moral loveliness, the persuasiveness, and all the characteristic features of the Gospel of Peace. Our rural populations are utterly ignorant of the true spirit of Christianity, and just in proportion as the Established Church prevails, just in proportion as its spirit is carried out in action, just in the same proportion will those who come most directly and exclusively under its influence be injured morally and spiritually thereby. (Cheers.) But it is upon the rich and educated that this system has produced perhaps its most deleterious effect. I hold in my hand an illustration of this. You know that the Liberation Society, among the other things it has done, has called into life an antagonistic society, known as the Church Institution, which held its annual meeting last week. There was a boast made of organisation all over the kingdom, and there is, perhaps, connected with that institution the most complete machinery for putting ideas into contact with the minds of the people, or for collecting the ideas of the people into a focus for action, that exists in this country. Yet, now just see the spirit in which this is alluded to by a periodical read almost exclusively by highly cultivated men, and observe the end for which the Establishment is supported. The object of the Church Institution is thus described in the *Saturday Review*:—

The Church Institution does not affect theories; it takes the world as it finds it, and seeks to represent the Church as it is, with all its differences, tendencies, schools, opinions, antipathies, divergencies, approximations. (Laughter.) It seeks not only to preserve the *status quo*, but to keep together those who, even though bent on change, yet for the present are held within the same sheepfold. What its founders seem to have felt was, that though men might agree to differ, yet they might as well differ in company. Consequently, they refuse to discuss doctrine; they confine themselves to the secular aspect of the Church; they look to it as an Establishment; they bind themselves together to defend its position, its interests, its endowments, and with all that the State ostensibly concerns itself.

That is a fair description of the objects of this association, and with those objects we have no reason to find fault. We ourselves are looking only to the Establishment as such, and not seeking in any way to lay our hands upon the Church; but observe the difference between them and us. They, with all their "divergencies, antipathies, approximations," and so on, are members of the same Church, whilst we, who are simply endeavouring to put truth into its right position, and not to define what is truth, are members of different churches. (Hear, hear.) Some of our friends have feared the effect of this machinery. But I have not the slightest fear—I have not the slightest fear of a steam-engine when there is no fire to boil the water. (Laughter.) Who is to belong to this? All sorts of persons, as described by the writer in the *Saturday Review*, except that "the Church Institution is no place for fanatics." (Laughter.)

From those who view the Church as a citadel, every stone of which is hallowed and sanctified, down to those who think that gentlemen in white ties are, in their way, almost as useful in the streets and to society, at least in its lowest ranks, as other gentlemen are who wear glazed hats, there is room for all in the comprehensive structure of the Church Institution. I will read one other sentence, in order to show the spirit of the writer. He says:—

Again, there are a good many people who have no sympathy with, or who cannot understand what they call high-flying views—that is, who do not apprehend the spiritual nature and functions of the Church, and would, perhaps, rather see them abrogated, but who have sufficient practical sense to know that even the lowest view of the Church must invest it with some corporate organisation, and some material body and form. To such positions, the Church Institution, not presenting any exclusive claims, offers absolute points of contact. They are content that theological disputes should be conducted, if at all, by theological experts; but they can understand that, apart from doctrine, there is a practical field for religion, to be applied, if not to themselves, at least to women and the poor, and that this field cannot be cultivated except by men. In short, they acknowledge that, on the whole, as man is a gregarious animal, the clergy may as well have a corporate existence, and that a corporate existence is best embodied in an Establishment.

And then the writer describes the object, and says:—

In the Church of England, somehow or other, too many large social interests are involved to be easily or lightly surrendered. The clergy are not only well-educated men, but, unlike all other clergies, the Church of England clergy comprehends, if it does not consist of, men of the world. The English Church, by its married clergy, its lay patronage, and its decent patrimony, is mixed up with every grade of social life.

I suppose that this will be read and accepted largely, by those who move in the upper class of life. Could there be a more offensive picture presented to the human mind of what the object of a Church should be, than that which is presented by this writer? Is it not an insult to our moral and spiritual sense, for it suggests to us that the ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are simply a sort of spiritual police, who exercise their authority, and that men who have no sympathy with the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom should yet support the Church, simply because they see that religion is a good thing to spread amongst society for the

sake of women and the poor. (Loud applause.) I say that that is the direct result of the Establishment principle. It has demoralised the consciences of men in regard to religion, and the longer we let it go on the more surely we may come to the conclusion that either God in His providence will bring back these people to something like a sense of their wrong by some great national calamity, or religion will be gradually eliminated from the empire. (Cheers.) It is our endeavour to oppose this system, and if we are doing it from a right motive, I cannot conceive how it is that there is such a discrepancy between our enthusiasm at meetings like this, and our fidelity and firmness when we go up to the poll. (Hear, hear.) That we who see the spiritual evils that are flowing out of this system of Church and State should refuse to employ all the agency which God has put within their reach in order to accomplish the object which we see to be so essential to the spiritual prosperity of the people, appears to me a mystery. (Hear, hear.) I will not say what may be precisely the mode in which all our friends should give expression to their sense of duty; but if these evils are perpetuated, or if they become more and more conspicuous and fatal in English society, it is owing to the apathy and indifference of those who profess to know better but who are afraid to do well. ("Hear," and cheers.) Unless we, as free churchmen—unless we would profess to appreciate Christianity as a spiritual system, and to see the incompatibility of its being maintained at all by the application of law and of force—unless we can stand by our principles, and in the face of the nation make such an exhibition of our earnestness and fidelity, as will convince all classes that what we profess we thoroughly believe,—then it is my conviction that the little progress we have made will soon be lost, because we are not worthy to fight the battle that God has devolved upon us. (Hear, hear.) But I hope better things; and we are looking forward to a time when we shall have to congratulate a meeting like this upon the accomplishment of two things. It is not that we want to turn Churchmen out of Parliament and put in Dissenters; it is not that we want to have men pledged simply to our ecclesiastical polity, but what we want is men who can understand and sympathise with the spirit of freedom as characteristic of the genius of the Gospel—and can apply that spirit in all their legislation; and those are the men we must try and seek out for our representatives; and inasmuch as we cannot get them in every place, for they are but few, I still believe we can get far more than we now have, and "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." (Cheers.) When we have done our duty, we may confidently look up to God to do for us all that His wisdom and His love has determined. (Loud cheers.)

The resolution was carried unanimously.

The Rev. T. ARNOLD, of Northampton, moved:—

That, concurring in the opinion expressed by Canon Wordsworth in Convocation, that "the bonds between Church and State are being every day weakened and severed," the meeting expresses its hope that the members of the Church, in lieu of struggling for the retention of political privileges, will prepare themselves for the abandonment of legal arrangements which prove to be valueless as safeguards of Christian doctrine, while they involve restrictions which are oppressive to individual consciences, and are seriously obstructive to Christian effort. He protested against the charge which had repeatedly been made, that the members of this Society were influenced by party considerations. If ever that was true, the time had certainly now gone by when any selfish element could enter into the opposition to Church Establishments in which the advocates of religious freedom were engaged for, the very foundations of that religion which was dearer than aught else, more now imperilled by the Established Church; and it would, therefore, be wrong for them to stand aside idly looking on. They did not presume to sit in judgment upon brethren in the Establishment. In no hypocritical spirit was it sought to take the mote out of a brother's eye, while it might be said they had a beam in their own; but neither would they consent to throw the mantle of a spurious charity over conduct that caused the blush of shame to come upon the cheek of every honest man. They were Churchmen by law, as well as Englishmen, and, therefore, it became their duty to form and express their opinions on the use or abuse of all national property which goes to the support of any religious community. Could there be anything more humiliating than to see those 1,100 clergymen sending out a weak protest against a decision which they were bound to respect by their ordination vows. (Hear, hear.) The people were beginning to conclude that a judgment which had roused the attention of the whole country, coming, as it did, from the highest Court in the land, could not be changed by any mere protest, and that the clergy must themselves rend the bond, or remain in slavery. (Cheers.) They had voluntarily submitted to the bonds of which they now complain, and had used them for three centuries to oppress other people; and again, he would say, they must either remain in slavery, or escape by the underground railway. The Bishop of London had said in Convocation, that no action of that body could possibly affect the decision of the Privy Council, and had expressed the opinion that the strength of the Established Church at this time consisted in quietness—reminding one of Earl Russell's advice politically, to "rest and be thankful." But, surely, to be quiet under such a decision as that which had been given, was impossible on the part of men holding Evangelical doctrine. Even with Nonconformists, the question was coming to be not simply the separation of the Church from the State, but the maintenance of vital Christianity and of the commonest principles of morality.

R. RUMNEY, Esq., of Manchester, seconded the resolution, which was carried unanimously.

H. O. WILLS, Esq., of Bristol, in moving the thanks of the meeting to the chairman, said he had come from Bristol to attend that meeting, and was thankful that he had done so. Here regarded the Established Church as part of the nation, and felt that, as an Englishman, he was responsible, so far as his influence extended, for the continuance of its errors.

The Rev. J. H. RYLAND seconded the resolution, which was carried by acclamation; and the proceedings then terminated.

THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY.

The annual meeting of this society was held on Wednesday at Exeter Hall. Notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather, the hall was crowded in every part. The Right Hon. the Earl of Shaftesbury, president of the society, took the chair at eleven o'clock; and among the ministers and gentlemen upon the platform were Lord Charles Russell, Mr. A. Kinnaid, M.P., the Malagasy Ambassadors, the Bishop of Winchester, the Bishop of Ripon, Dean Goode, Sir J. Kennaway, Mr. E. Baines, M.P., Mr. R. Hanbury, M.P., Rev. Dr. George Osborn, Rev. Dr. George Smith, Canon Stowell, Canon Carus, Rev. Dr. Edmond, Rev. G. Collinson, Rev. Dr. Massie, Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel, the Rev. Leland Noel, Rev. C. D. Marston, Rev. C. Marshall, Rev. E. Bayley, Rev. O. H. Spurgeon, Rev. W. Arthur, Rev. J. Godwin, Rev. A. Hannay, John Bockett, Esq., &c.

The Rev. S. B. BERGNE, one of the secretaries, began the proceedings by reading portions of Scripture.

The Rev. Mr. JACKSON, the other secretary, read the report.

It commenced with the quotation, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Such was the testimony of the Lord Himself to the truth of His own words; such the foundation on which rested all their hopes for time and eternity. If the Bible were not the written Word of God, then they had no peace in life, no certain hope beyond the grave. "It is written," was the one reply with Christ repelled the assaults and silenced the objections of the subtle tempter. The Books of Moses whose authenticity and inspiration were so daringly called in question in the present day, were nevertheless the great bulwark behind which the Son of God Himself sustained the fierce shock of Satan's onslaught, the power before which the enemy gave up the unequal conflict in which he had engaged. (Cheers.) If under a dark and imperfect dispensation such was the force of revealed truth, what encouragement this afforded to those who lived in days of Gospel light, and whose privilege it was to make known not only the law which was given by Moses, but the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. Such was the mission of the venerable society, whose sixtieth anniversary they were met to celebrate, and whose aim was the noblest on which the mind of man could dwell. The meeting was then congratulated that the losses referred to at the last anniversary had been made up in the past year, and that the income and issues of the year were the largest that had ever been recorded. In proceeding to the foreign operations of the society, the report commenced with France. In that country it said there were two points which called for special notice. The first was that the work during the past year had met with no opposition on the part of the authorities. In all cases needful authorisation has been granted to the colporteurs with such readiness as to induce a hope that those in power might ere long recognise the Bible as the only sure foundation of morality, and the only true source of loyalty. The next point was that no hindrance had arisen from those classes, for whose more immediate benefit the colporteurs laboured. On the contrary, there had been diffused throughout the country such a yearning after religious liberty, that any publication or any course of action which gave prominence to the leading truths of Christianity, was welcomed by the people as helping forward that consummation to which they hoped one day to reach. The issue of the Paris depot during the year amounted to 74,774 copies. The work of colportage had been continued with unabated activity, and with no small measure of success. The military especially had afforded a hopeful field of labour, and from their ranks most efficient colporteurs had often been obtained. In connection with Belgium, deep regret was expressed at the death of the long-trying and valuable agent, Mr. Kirkpatrick. The issues of the year in that country amounted to 4,800. The depositary in Holland had reviewed in a spirit of gratitude the work in that country in the last twenty years. The total circulation during that period was 577,000, and during the past year 23,000, being an increase of 2,500. In February the circulation of the year, under the superintendence of Mr. Davis, was 196,000, being an increase of 36,000. The issues of the depot at Cologne had increased by more than 30,000. The occupation of Schleswig-Holstein by troops of the German Confederation, followed soon after by those of Austria and Prussia, called for active measures in order that the nationalities represented in the allied armies might be supplied with the Scriptures. Five colporteurs were at once appointed, and they carried on their labours under the personal superintendence of Mr. Davis. Speaking of these colporteurs, Mr. Davis said:—"Go where you will, you find traces of their presence. Hundreds, nay, thousands of copies of the New Testament have found their way into the knapsacks of soldiers, and into the hospitals. Many of them are carried into battle by the men, and brought back again with their wounded bodies." At Frankfurt similar results were recorded. The issues there during the past year amounted to 109,000, being an increase of 18,000. As regarded Vienna, it was remarked that the reduction of prices made in the last year had already produced a most beneficial effect, and the circulation of the year exceeded that of the preceding one by 13,000 volumes. It was very satisfactory that Mr. Millward again dated his reports from the capital of Austria. (Cheers.) In the face of the liberal principles which the Austrian Government had adopted, and in the midst of the progress Austria had manifestly made under the blessings of a constitutional administration, a hope might be entertained that a better spirit would in future be evinced in reference to the Scriptures, and that they would not again be banished from the country. The committee had undertaken to print the New Testament in the vernacular of Croatia, among whose people there was an extensive awakening. The Rev. Dr. Simon, formerly of Manchester, had been appointed to the office of depositary at Berlin. It was only needful, the report

said, to mention the name of Denmark in order to touch a chord of sympathy which would vibrate through every heart. (Cheers.) The present war could not be contemplated without much sadness of spirit, and an earnest prayer that it might please God in His infinite goodness to restrain the fury of the oppressor, and speedily to restore peace to that distracted country. The secretary of the agency at Copenhagen had been most active during the past year; he had visited Schleswig and Holstein in person, making arrangements with the garrison chaplains of the principal towns for the supply of the New Testament to the Danish troops; and since his return a large number of copies of the Scriptures had been forwarded to various centres for distribution. The circulation in Denmark in the last year was 19,000. In Norway and Sweden the circulation had been somewhat below the average, but the work had been continued with energy and success. The New Testament and the Psalms in Icelandic, which were announced last year as in preparation, had been issued from the press, and the gratitude of the distant islanders for such a precious gift was unbounded. In Russia, where the same difficulties existed as were previously referred to, the work was being done apart from the society's instrumentality. A fresh edition of the New Testament in modern Russ had been issued by the Synod of the Free Church, and was sold at the low price of 5d. Under the head, "Spain and Portugal," the committee said they were aware of the need in those countries of the Word of God; but they thought it best to content themselves on that occasion with saying that they were anxiously watching for opportunities for its introduction, and patiently waiting God's time for the signal to commence. The work in Italy was still progressing satisfactorily. There was an increase in the issues of the past year of 1,200, the total number being 28,000. A small addition had been made to the staff of colporteurs. There had not been wanting instances in which even priests had been constrained to become helpers in the work of which they were previously bitter foes. A second edition of Diodati's New Testament had been issued from the press at Florence, and during the last year upwards of 4,000 had been expended, chiefly by the working classes, in its eager purchase. In Turkey, though the Hatti Humaioun was not fully carried out, the issues were considerably in excess of those of the previous year. A visit paid by Dr. Thompson to the north-west provinces of European Turkey had convinced him that there was a wide opening in that direction. The Turkish New Testament, with marginal references, would soon be sent to the press. The change in the state of affairs in Greece afforded better prospects for the work of Bible distribution. As regarded India, the committee had once more carefully considered their obligations, and it had a strong conviction that that society ought to be in the van in the missionary operations in that vast country. The one great want of India was the Word of God; and a scheme had been matured which involved the appointment of two or more principal agents, who, through the instrumentality of sub-agents and colporteurs, would seek to distribute the Scriptures among all orders of purchasers who might be ready to receive them. In furtherance of this object, Colonel Lamb had already been appointed principal agent for the presidency of Bengal. In China evidences were not wanting that God's set time to favour the nation was come. Missionaries had proclaimed the Gospel without hindrance, and the Scriptures had been received by many without gainsaying, and by some with joy. In New Zealand the Maori Bible was now rapidly advancing towards completion. In the islands of the South Seas heathenism had recently been renounced by a whole tribe, on whose behalf a special prayer-meeting was held some time before. As respected Madagascar, the committee were doing their utmost to complete the Malagasy Bible with as little delay as possible. They had recently had a pleasing interview with the two Ambassadors from Madagascar, who were now on the platform. (Loud cheers.) A Bible, suitably bound, was on the occasion referred to presented to each of them; and, in replying to the observations of the chairman, they said that they had been much struck with England's greatness and power as a nation, and that they ascribed it wholly to the free circulation of God's Word among the people. The prayers of the meeting were besought on behalf of the Rev. Mr. Stern, who had recently met with such cruel treatment from the King of Abyssinia whilst endeavouring to make a people acquainted with "the truth as it is in Jesus." From British Columbia and Vancouver's Island satisfactory accounts had been received; and in Mexico, where priestly power had been much diminished, the society's agent, Mr. Butler, had already met with great success. Under the head "Domestic," allusion was made to the loss which the society had sustained during the year by the death of three of its vice-presidents—the Archbishop of Dublin, the Earl of Aberdeen, and the Bishop of Peterborough, and of two of the life governors—the Rev. Francis Cunningham, of Lowestoft; and the Rev. Dr. Raffles, of Liverpool. It was added that the work of the Biblewomen in London was still proceeding satisfactorily; that their number now exceeds 200; that 846l. had been voted for their salaries in the past year; and that during the year they had distributed 9,589 copies of the Word of God.

The receipts of the year ending March 31, 1864, had, it was stated, exceeded those of any preceding year. The amount applicable to the general purposes of the society was 59,897l. 13s. 6d., being an increase of 5,634l. 13s. 6d. over the preceding year; while the amount received for Bibles and Testaments had been 79,007l. 10s. 6d., or 5,280l. 6s. 6d. more than in the preceding year. The total receipts from the ordinary sources of income had amounted to 168,905l. 4s., being 1,221l. 2s. 8d. more than in any former year. To the above must be added the sum of 770l. 19s. 11d. for the Chinese New Testament Fund, and 27l. 13s. 8d. for the special fund for India; making a grand total of 169,703l. 17s. 7d. The issues of the society for the year were as follows: From the depot at home, 1,849,767; from depôts abroad, 645,351—total, 2,495,118 copies. The total issues of the society now amount to 45,539,452 copies. The ordinary payments have amounted to 144,316l. 13s. 8d., and the payments on account of the special funds to 7,039l. 0s. 3d.; making the total expenditure of the year to amount to 151,355l. 13s. 11d., being 816l. 13s. 2d. more

than in the preceding year. The society is under engagements to the extent of 109,619*l.* 14*s.* 11*d.*

The CHAIRMAN said it was unnecessary for him to interpose between the meeting and the business before them. He had only to join with them in congratulation and hearty thanksgiving to Almighty God, that this unhistorical, uninspired, uninformed, and unnecessary Book has been demanded with redoubled avidity.

Where crowding ranks on every side arise,
Demanding life, impatient for the skies.

(Loud applause.) And here they had upon that platform a proof of what he said. Here they had the Ambassadors from the distant island of Madagascar, coming there to record the triumphs of God's Holy Word in their own land, ready and rejoicing to carry back to their country a narrative of the triumphs which they had witnessed in this. God grant that we might have many such from all parts of the civilised and the uncivilised world.

The Bishop of WINCHESTER, in moving the adoption of the report, said that, as an old member of that society—having been connected with it more than half a century—he felt it a great privilege to be allowed to stand upon that platform, and thank God for his past success, and take courage for the future. There were peculiarities about the present times which made it more important than ever that they should be enabled, as they had done that day, to listen to the report of the extended circulation of the Word of Truth, and to be able to rejoice in knowing that the funds were increased, and the resources of the society, so far from being diminished, were flowing in a larger and more liberal stream. He looked upon the Bible Society as the most important society within the bounds of their own country at the present moment.

Error, like some of those disorders which affect the human body, seems to come from time to time with a kind of periodical recurrence. True it is that the errors of the present day are the errors of the past time. There is nothing new under the sun, and indeed there is nothing new in scepticism and free-thinking. The Voltaires of another country, or the Paines of our own, or the daring spirits of yet more modern days, over whom we lament, and of whom we are ashamed—(cheers)—but of whom we are not afraid—(redoubled cheers)—they have unquestionably said nothing in our own day which has never been said in times past. And the Bible Society, like the Bible itself, suffers from attacks recurring from time to time. Sometimes it is the constitution of the society that it is impugned; sometimes it is the catholicity of its organisation; sometimes it is the Apocryphal question which is brought under discussion; sometimes the Trinitarian controversy divides our friends. But in all this there is nothing which need frighten us. The Bible still holds its place; it holds its place in our hands, and, what is far more, it holds its place in our hearts; and if this be so every friend of the society will rejoice to learn that at home, as well as abroad, the circulation of the Word of Truth has been increased, and that now, here at home as abroad, that which began in small things, the smallest of all seeds, has become a great tree, with leaves for the healing of the nations.

Lord CHARLES RUSSELL, in seconding the resolution, said that the position he occupied was to have been filled in the first instance by Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, now confined to his house by sickness. His place was to have been taken by his Grace the Duke of Argyll, at that moment at Osborne in attendance on her Majesty. He had been asked to supply the place, and was loath to do so at so short a notice; but he felt it a very great honour to appear in any capacity in doing the work of the Bible Society.

If Lord Stratford is sick, I am well, and I know no better use I could make of my health than working, so far as I can, on behalf of our great society; and if the Duke of Argyll is absent in obeying a royal command, I feel that I obey a command even higher than any royal one, when I come forward to defend the claims of the British and Foreign Bible Society. (Loud cheers.)

The Rev. W. ARTHUR (secretary to the Wesleyan Missionary Society) then moved the following resolution:—

That this meeting recognises in the largely increased receipts of the past year a gratifying proof of growing attachment to the constitution and objects of the British and Foreign Bible Society; while the immense circulation of the Holy Scriptures effected during the same period, in the home and foreign fields of labour, and so greatly in excess of former years, cannot fail to awaken devout gratitude to Almighty God for the abundant blessing with which He has been pleased to accompany the efforts made to honour and circulate the inspired volume.

In the course of his speech the rev. gentleman spoke of the claims of Italy:—

We have heard to-day of the Bible being freely sold in the streets of Italy, and largely circulated through its population. It is only a very few years ago, when in the streets of Naples, looking over an old bookstall, I saw a pamphlet entitled, "Biblia Sacra." I said to the man, "What is that?" He said, "It is the Holy Bible." I took it up and turned to the title-page, and seeing upon it in Italian, "The Holy Bible for Children," I opened it, and found it printed on such paper as our confectioners might use to sell confectionery in, with such pictures as they might put on their bags which they put their biscuits in—hardly so good. I said, "What do you call this book? You do not call it a Bible." "Certainly it is; certainly it is the Bible." Well, I bought it for sixpence, and there it is, my lord. (Cheers and laughter.) At the present day, if a native of the Friendly Islands wants to see one of the ancient idols that his fathers worshipped, he is obliged to come to England to look for it; and perhaps, my lord, in a little time if a native of Naples wants to see one of the Bibles that his fathers were treated to, he will be obliged to come to England for this. (Laughter.) The only advantage that this Bible has over those circulated by your society is, that it settles two points in controversy that are left undetermined in the other Bible. It settles the point that St. Peter did go to Rome; for the very last question is, that both the

apostles, Peter and Paul, were put to death for the faith in Rome. St. Peter was crucified with his head downwards, and St. Paul was beheaded; and it settles another very important point not touched upon in our Bible—the day of the month on which it took place, the 29th June. (Renewed laughter.) I think the change represented between the sale of this pamphlet in Naples for the Word of God, and the fact that the whole Bible is freely circulated throughout all Italy, except in the little part of it where the Pope holds some dominion, is one of the most wonderful things even in modern history, and one for which we ought certainly to raise our praises to the God of the Bible. But, my lord, I am not satisfied with what this Bible Society is doing in Italy. I should like to see every large town in that great country having one of the most prominent shops in it in such a place that no man could live in the town without seeing the Bible. I should like to have that shop opened and so labelled, that there should be no mistake that the Bible was to be sold in the Italian tongue, the very fact of its being there being pressed upon the attention of everyone. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Arthur then referred to the claims of India, and proposed that the society solemnly, deliberately, but with great care and caution, should take in hand the work of putting a copy of the Word of God, or a portion of it, into the hands, into the house of every person of India, where there was one who could read it, and that they should print in proportion as they had the means of distributing.

For this work the one single postulate is, a man with an organising military head upon his shoulders, and a strong hand, who can train up a corps of colporteurs, who can weed out the unfit men and select the fit men, who can urge them on, and greatly strengthen them, and increase their numbers, and I calculate that perhaps it would take some eight years to raise a corps of even one hundred such colporteurs. I thought that there was one thing there might be done for India in the course of one generation—give every town in India a church. You cannot in one generation give every neighbourhood a mission station, you cannot in one generation give every people a school; but in one generation you might, if that strong hand of yours were stretched out to the work in the name of God, and if you called upon that Christian multitude behind you to come up and help, you might by God's blessing leaven the whole length and breadth of British India, so that there should be not one village in it where the foot of God's minister had not trodden, and not one home in which there was a reader, into which the opportunity of reading God's Word had not been brought. That you can do, and it is the only thing that within a generation, we can do for all India.

The speaker then proceeded to reply at some length to objections which had been urged against his plan. In concluding his speech, he said that the time would come when those who made a noise in dashing their little spears against the breastplate of great old Moses, would be forgotten:—

In the halls of Thebes, the very last time I visited them, there was a dull silence, and there might have been no one in that outspread loneliness, when I heard a voice coming through some passage, and that voice said, "Ehram, Ehram," and it was answered by another voice from another quarter, "Yah, Mouss," and then by another, "Yosef." Ah, I think those names are living here. There was no man to answer to the name of Ptolemy or Caesar. The very name of Pharaoh is preserved in the history of Joseph, and so it is with all these that are the opponents of the Word of God. The men of to-day, like the men of the past who assail the Bible, have only one kind of immortality before them. They survive not in their own annals, but in the annals of truth; their names, if they live at all, live like those of lost battles, on the banners of the conquerors. (Loud cheers.)

The Bishop of ELY, in seconding the resolution, said he believed there was throughout the land a growing attachment to the constitution of that society on account of its catholic basis:—

We know that its constitution is such as to admit of the co-operation of all persons, of every class, of every creed, who simply agree in the efforts to circulate the pure, unadulterated Word of God. This constitution is to some a matter of objection; to my own mind I acknowledge it to be one of the charms of the Word of God. I think it is delightful that, amid all the dissensions and divisions by which the visible Church of Christ is unhappily so much torn and divided, there should be one great platform upon which Christians of every denomination may meet together, and, whether they agree or differ as to their external ecclesiastical organisations, can agree in this great principle, that the Bible is the Word of God, to whose utterances we must, one and all, unconditionally bow, to which we must render homage as the supreme and only infallible source of all saving truth. As I apprehend, my lord, we do not meet upon this platform either as Churchmen or as Dissenters. As a Churchman, I do not feel that I abate one jot of my Churchmanship by uniting with the friends of the British and Foreign Bible Society, nor do I for one moment apprehend that there is a single Dissenter among us who would admit that he bates one jot of his Nonconformity in joining with the friends of this institution. I deny that we meet either as Churchmen or as Dissenters here; but the capacity in which we do meet is that of men who reverently attribute to the Bible Divine inspiration, who hold not that the Word of God may be found in the Bible, but that the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is an infallible record of the mind and will of God as conveyed to holy men of old, who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. We meet here because we love the Bible as the gift of God to our fallen world, and believe that the Scriptures are able to make men wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, and that it is the bounden duty of all who possess that inestimable treasure to endeavour to circulate it to those who have it not.

The Rev. Canon STOWELL, in supporting the resolution, said that the British and Foreign Bible Society held that the Bible was given by inspiration of God, that the whole Bible was pervaded and controlled and directed by the Spirit of God, and that there was in it

truth without mixture of error, the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. He considered this question of the inspiration of the Bible to be the question of the day.

I thank God that this Society holds no less strenuously the whole Bible than it holds "the Bible"; for we never can cover the Old Testament from the New. (Cheers.) They must stand or fall together. (Renewed cheers.) The New Testament stands on the shoulders of the Old, and if you strike down the Old Testament, you infallibly bring down the New. It is in vain for men to talk of the difficulties of Moses and the Prophets, but who say that they still hold to Christ and the Apostles. You cannot enter into the temple except by the door, and the Old Testament is the Divine porch by which you approach to the New. It is through the side of the Old Testament that attempts are made to stab the New; and depend upon it the object in view is not simply to overturn Moses, and to discredit some of the chronologies and peculiarities of the Old Testament, but to subvert the Cross. (Cheers.) To get rid of the great atonement, to reject the blood that cleanses from sin—the sinner's one hope and the saint's chief joy. (Cheers.) The doctrine of the Cross is still to the carnal mind a source of enmity. I feel that upon this point we cannot be too strenuous, that the Old Testament Scriptures are, if possible, more intelligible, more vital, more impressive, than they ever were. When the old prophets and priests and righteous men looked forward to Christ's coming, they were sometimes in the position of men looking through the beautiful stained-glass windows of our cathedrals from the outside. Thus beheld they are dark and undefined, but when looked at from within, illuminated by the sun, how the colours appear and the figures become defined. (Cheers.) So when the prophets and patriarchs looked at the Old Testament from the outside, they could see but little of the glory; while we who look from within, behold the truth and beauty undeveloped, and our understanding of the New is far clearer when we regard it in the light of the Old. We find, indeed, that both Testaments are so cemented together, that it is impossible to shake the one without dislocating the other. This being so, let "the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible," continue to be the watchword of this society. (Loud cheers.)

Mr. JOSIAH FOSTER said: I have been a supporter of this society for sixty years; and of late I have been often led to exclaim, in contrasting the past with the present of this country and of the world at large—"What hath God wrought?" I believe that, with all the sin and iniquity that abounds in this country or elsewhere, the labours of this society had not been in vain in the Lord, and have been greatly blessed. On the other hand we know that sin and iniquity do still abound, that even after sixty years' labour there is ample room for the friends of this society to continue working. I ought to rejoice with thankfulness both in the simplicity and in the catholicity of the object we have in view; and let us encourage one another to maintain these two points intact. (Hear, hear.)

The Rev. Dr. EDMOND, in an eloquent address, proposed votes of thanks to the president, vice-president, and officers of the society, and the re-appointment of the committee.

After a short address from the Rev. C. D. MARSTON,

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON delivered a lively address, in the course of which he said:—

I believe that ninety-nine out of every hundred Christians are not called for the defence of the Gospel against infidel objectors so much as the pressing of that Gospel home to men's hearts, casting light upon the eyes that have been in darkness, that they may behold its glory and rejoice therein. To apply the Gospel seems to be absolutely necessary through the help of God the Holy Spirit, that we may really know its fruits. The tale is that when Scanderbeg's sword was hung against the wall, one who had heard of the trenchant deeds of valour done by the barbarous conqueror, said, as he looked on the sword, "I can see nothing." No; but if you could have seen the sinews of the brawny arm that was wont to wield it, you would have admired the sword and the arm too. Now, the Word of God is nothing but a dead lever till the Spirit of God, with omnipotent arm, grasps it, and then it cuts to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And we want to cry out to-day, "Lord, if Thine adversaries doubt whether this be Thy sword, lay hold upon its hilt, and cut to their very quick, and make them know that there is a God in Israel still, and that there is still God's Word." Merely to circulate the Bible will not prove its virtues. There is no virtue in the Bible any more than there is harm in a three-volume novel, if I do not read the one or the other. If they lie there on the shelf unread, the one will do me no good and the other no harm. We may scatter Bibles by millions, and reduce the price to twopence or nothing, but we have done nothing but add to men's responsibility, unless we pray earnestly that God will lead men to study it, and by His Spirit, bless it to their conversion, their edification, their sanctification in righteousness. Pray God to bring the Word home to the heart and the conscience, and it shall give light. (Cheers.) I may, therefore, with as much brevity as possible, just say that I think the Bible Society, while it continues its efforts to spread the Bible, will always do well to listen with earnestness to the advice, and look with great affection upon the efforts, of those who wish to make it a society for Bible reading and Bible understanding, as well as Bible distributing. While we want collectors and auxiliaries, and all that, we do want more of the Bible-reading element—more Bible expounding to the people. It strikes me that here in England we greatly need more Bible catechising of the children of all classes. The way to secure the masses would be to secure them when young.

He thought also that the exposition of Scripture should become more and more distinct a feature in our congregations. And if they would exercise more influence upon others, they wanted to cultivate in their own souls a greater deference and respect for the Word of God in all things.

The Rev. Dr. GEORGE SMITH moved, and JOHN BOCKETT, Esq., seconded, a vote of thanks to the chairman, which was carried with acclamation and suitably responded to.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION.

On Thursday morning a conference of delegates from country and town Sunday-school unions was held in the Jubilee Building, Old Bailey. At eight o'clock the delegates, to the number of upwards of 100, partook of a substantial breakfast, after which the company assembled in the lecture-hall (the gallery of which was graced by the presence of ladies), for the purpose of conferring as to the best means of carrying on the work of Sunday-schools, so as to secure the best and most lasting results. The chair was occupied by W. H. Watson, Esq., and the conference was opened by Mr. R. J. Brand, who read a paper upon "The methods to be adopted by Sunday-school teachers in directing and encouraging their scholars, with a view to secure their decision for Christ, union with His Church, and devotion to His service." Mr. Brand was listened to with the greatest attention, and when he had concluded a long and interesting discussion ensued, in which a number of speakers took part, and during which many valuable hints and suggestions pertinent to the subject were thrown out. The committee and delegates afterwards dined together, and the conference was resumed in the afternoon, when details were given of the work being carried on in some of the provincial unions.

The annual meeting of the Sunday-school Union was held at Exeter Hall on Thursday evening; the Earl of Shaftesbury in the chair. On the platform were the Revs. Dr. Cooke, Dr. Allen, Dr. Robinson, Thos. Alexander, J. Keed, Antliff, Rodgers, W. H. Watson, Esq., Messrs. Cuthbertson, Lee, Tresidder, &c., also numerous parties of teachers from Brentford, Richmond, Croydon, Woolwich, and other outlying places. The meeting was opened with singing and prayer.

W. H. WATSON, Esq., the senior secretary, read the report, which stated the great increase which had taken place within the last twelve years in the number of schools, teachers, and scholars. In 1852 the number of schools in town and country was 1,990; of teachers, 46,847; and of scholars, 346,971; while in 1864 the number of schools was 3,284; of teachers, 73,134; and of scholars, 635,654. The business in the depository during the year had also considerably increased, the sales having amounted to 18,077l. 7s. 4d. The expenditure on the benevolent account had amounted to 1,852l. 0s. 4d., while the income had been 1,754l. 10s. 3d., leaving a deficiency of 97l. 10s. 1d. There were 600,000 children in London, between the ages of five and fifteen, but the gross total on the books of the Sunday-schools did not exceed 200,000, so that there were still many hundred thousands of children destitute of the moral and religious instruction afforded by the Sunday-school.

The CHAIRMAN dwelt upon the importance of the Sunday-school system, and expressed his hope that the Union would ever preserve its simple unsectarian character. He trusted that the schools associated with it would ever retain their pure, simple, Evangelical, and Gospel character; that nothing would be taught in them but the great truths of redeeming love; that the great thing to be applied to the intellects and driven into the hearts of the children, would be the doctrine of a crucified Saviour. In these days, when there were all sorts of fanciful theology, when so-called men of science, with their part knowledge and presumptuous ignorance, built up great systems from the tenth part of an old bone, and contended from their discovery of a piece of flint that the Book of Genesis must be wrong; when these things were troubling men's minds, and the persons who held these doctrines were held to be more liberal than their fellows, and to be men of enlarged minds—let the doctrine of the Sunday-school be only the simple saving verities of the Gospel. The report told them that there were still some 200,000 in this metropolis alone to whom this bread of life was not administered. How was this? Was it that they had been created by a different hand, or cared for by a different Saviour, that they had not been brought within the fold? Was it that the waves of the Gospel had been thrown upon them, and dashed off as if from hardened rocks because incapable of penetrating their obstinate hearts? No such thing. The great secret lay in the lack of zeal, the want of personal consecration, the defect of teachers. There were hundreds and thousands of persons who gave neither of their substance nor their time to the cause of God. He regretted to see, and there were no words in the English language strong enough to express his feelings on this question, that there was a growing coldness over large masses of professing Christians. He believed that God in His goodness had at the present day done that which He had not done before—He had specially prepared the soil in which the seed was to be sown. There never was a time in which the masses of the working people were so ready to receive instruction in, and so open to the influences of, the Gospel; and if they but laboured amongst them earnestly and with the exhibition of a heartfelt sympathy, they would meet with such a reception, that in a few years hence they would return to that hall saying, "We could not have believed it." (Cheers.)

The Rev. Dr. COOKE moved:—

That this meeting would desire to exercise submission to the Divine will under the afflictive dispensations which have occurred to their fellow labourers; they desire to record their gratitude that, whilst some who have long and zealously laboured in various ways to promote the instruction of the young, have thus been laid aside, others have been raised up by the Great Head of the Church to fill the vacant places, so that the Sunday-school Union in all its various departments has been maintained in all its efficiency, and its influence throughout the country has largely increased.

He said that there were about 3,000,000 of children

now receiving instruction in Sabbath-schools. Every ten years these 3,000,000 were exchanged for another three, and the process was continually going on. Who, then, could estimate the amount of good resulting from Sabbath-schools? They were sometimes asked where they would find the millions who had passed away. Let them look amongst the virtuous and industrious and happy population of this country—there they would find them. Let them look into the pulpits—there were hundreds occupying the sacred desk who had received their first good in a Sunday-school, and he (Dr. Cooke) was one.

The Rev. J. G. ROGERS, of Ashton-under-Lyne, said he came from a district where, during the last few years, there had been a most remarkable demonstration of the value of Sunday-school work. The good spirit which had been manifested by the population during times of great hardship was mainly owing to the influences which Sunday-schools had brought to bear upon the people. There was one fact in connection with Sunday-schools he thought was not recognised as it ought to be, viz., the evidence which they afford as to the reality of Christian principle and truth. It was sometimes said that Christianity was a decaying system. Certainly the system which sent out 300,000 labourers week after week, actuated by no spirit but faith in the system and love to Him by whom it had been given, was dying very hard. (Applause.)

The Chairman being obliged to leave, the Dean of Dromore succeeded him, and it was stated that that was the fourth meeting over which Lord Shaftesbury had presided that day, while he was suffering under considerable indisposition.

The Rev. W. H. CHARLESWORTH moved the following resolution:—

That the Sunday-school teachers now assembled would not conceal from themselves or from others the painful fact that, while Sunday-schools have proved such important auxiliaries to the Church in its great work of bringing souls to the Saviour, these advantages are not yet enjoyed by one half of the young persons in the metropolitan districts who ought to be found in them; that the present condition and occupation of these young persons is generally injurious to their present and future welfare, and calculated to render them an evil to society at large, as they grow up in life; and that this meeting rejoices in the efforts now making to bring them under religious instruction in Sunday-schools, and would earnestly commend these efforts to the prayerful sympathy and liberal support of the ministers, officers, and members of all Christian churches in the metropolis.

The Rev. Dr. HUGH ALLEN, in seconding the resolution, expressed his pleasure at the Catholicity of the society.

The Rev. FRANCIS TUCKER, in moving a vote of thanks to the chairman, related some particulars of the early life of the late Mr. Kershaw, M.P., in connection with the Sunday-school at Manchester. Mr. WATSON seconded the resolution, which was carried with acclamation, and the Dean of DROMORE briefly returned thanks.

SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL IN FOREIGN PARTS.—The annual meeting of this society was held in St. James's Hall, Piccadilly, last Thursday April 28; the Archbishop of Canterbury in the chair. After an address from the president, the Duke of Marlborough proposed the following resolution:—

That the continually enlarging sphere of the society's operations gives it a yearly increasing claim on the support of the members of our Church.

Mr. Cardwell, M.P., seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously. The Earl of Harrowby then moved, and the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P., seconded the following resolution, which was carried:—

That the aid which the society has given to the foundation and endowment of the Church in many lands, by promoting the appointment of colonial and missionary bishops and by contributing towards local endowments, demands an acknowledgment as a permanent service to the cause of Christianity throughout the world.

Lord Harrowby spoke of the alarm that was felt when the Government grant of 18,000l. or 20,000l. a-year, which, at that time, formed the greater part of the society's income, was withdrawn; the ample compensation for the loss which public benevolence had supplied, and the great importance of the principle upon which the society proceeded—viz., of planting the Church in our colonies and dependencies upon the episcopal principle, by sending out bishops where they sent out missionaries. The Bishop of Columbia then proposed the following resolution, which was duly carried unanimously:—

That the Church of England is specially bound to labour for the conversion of the heathen subjects of the British Crown, and that this meeting therefore earnestly appeals to the whole Church to supply the society with the means to extend its missions both in the eastern and western portions of the vast empire of Great Britain.

Several other speakers having addressed the meeting, the report, which was not read, stated that in its last report, the society had to lament a falling off of income for the year 1862, resulting from the distress in the manufacturing districts. There had been a considerable increase for 1863, under the head of subscriptions, donations, and collections. This favourable result is due, in great measure, to the liberal response which many of the society's friends made to its "statement and appeal." The receipts for the year ending December 31, 1863, were as follows:—General fund—subscriptions, donations, &c., 62,600l. 5s. 9d.; legacies, 6,240l. 16s. 9d.; dividends, interest, &c., 4,516l. 1s.—73,357l. 3s. 6d.; appropriated funds, 8,900l. 7s. 4d.; special funds, 5,575l. 0s. 6d.; total, 87,832l. 11s. 4d. The society is steadily proceeding in the course upon which it entered several years ago, of reducing its grants in those dioceses and colonies which, through increasing wealth and population, are yearly becoming more equal to the support of their own church and clergy.

PROTESTANT REFORMATION SOCIETY.—The thirty-seventh annual meeting of this society took place on Monday, May 2, at the Hanover-square Rooms. Lord Calthorpe was to have presided, but was unable to attend through a severe cold; in his absence the chair was taken by Admiral Vernon Harcourt. The Rev. Mr. Clements opened the meeting with prayer, and then proceeded to read the report, which stated that many conversions had been made from the Church of Rome. Numerous agencies had been established for the spread of Roman Catholic doctrines, which had for the last few years been most active, as the following statistics would show:—In 1829 there were in this country but 449 chapels, 447 priests, and no monasteries, convents, or colleges. In 1863 there were 1,092 chapels, 1,440 priests, 36 monasteries, 186 convents, and 12 colleges. This showed the necessity of active exertions being made to check Romanism as it existed at the present day. After detailing the steps which had been taken by the society during the last year in different parts of the United Kingdom, it concluded with its financial statement. This showed a balance of 1,114l. 17s. 5d. from last year, and receipts from all other sources 5,505l., making a total of 4,619l. 17s. 9d., whilst the total expenses had amounted to 3,832l. 12s. 11d., leaving a balance to be carried forward to next account of 787l. 4s. 10d. Mr. George Finch moved the adoption of the report, which was seconded by Mr. Long, and carried unanimously. The Bishop of Ripon, the Rev. Dr. Cumming, and another gentleman addressed the meeting.

CHRISTIAN VERNACULAR EDUCATION SOCIETY FOR INDIA.—The sixth annual meeting in aid of the objects of this society took place on Friday, April 29, at Willis's-room, King-street, St. James's; the Duke of Argyll in the chair. His grace opened the proceedings by calling attention to the great necessity which existed for spreading Christian education among the natives of India. The days were now passed, he observed, though not very long passed, when it was considered dangerous to educate the natives of India; and no better evidence could be given of the fallacy of that theory than was to be found in the evidence taken before the various courts-martial regarding the origin of the last mutiny. The result of that evidence was, that that mutiny was really due to the almost brutal ignorance which existed among our Indian fellow-subjects; and this fact alone was sufficient to show the nature and importance of the present society, whose objects were to translate into native languages works of a decidedly Christian character, to institute seminaries for the education of Christian teachers, and to establish vernacular Christian schools. Such work as the society thus proposed to promote could not be done by the Government, but might be successfully accomplished with the aid of educational grants by the various churches, to which a free course was now open. The main object of the institution being in fact to provide Christian education for multitudes in India which neither the Government nor missionaries could undertake, little argument need be used to show the strong claim it presented to public support. A report was presented, from which it was gathered that the society had now twenty-seven agents (European and native), and 1,200 children under Christian instruction, and had established training institutions and competitive examinations for increasing and improving the present staff of Christian teachers. The society had issued 1,000,000 publications in the fourteen languages of India, including school-books, Scripture maps, works for mission agents, and the illustrated monthly magazines. The receipts for the year 1863-4 amounted to 5,718l. 14s. 8d., and the expenditure to 5,054l. 12s. 9d., leaving a balance of 664l. 1s. 11d. The Archbishop of York, Mr. J. C. Colquhoun, and others, addressed the meeting in favour of resolutions—first, for the adoption of the report, and the election of officers; secondly, declaring, "That, while returning thanks to God for success in the past, for the increased facilities now offered by Government grants in aid (as well as for the awakening of the native mind to the necessity of education), this meeting feels that Christianity is upon its trial, and that all the churches of Christ are bound to glorify their Great Head by taking advantage of these open doors to disseminate instruction far and wide throughout our Indian empire." The report and resolution were adopted, and a tribute of thanks was paid to the chairman.

THE RELIGIOUS BOOK SOCIETY.—The one-hundred-and-fourteenth annual meeting of this society was held at the London Coffee House, Ludgate-hill, on Wednesday evening, May 4th. After singing and prayer, in the unavoidable absence of Alderman Challis, the chair was occupied by W. Kendle, Esq., treasurer. The report, presented by the secretary, the Rev. I. Vale Mummery, showed a very satisfactory state of affairs, that the income of the society during the past year had exceeded that of the previous year by 2,000l.; and that during the last four years the business of the society had more than doubled itself. The amount of annual subscriptions and donations was 480l. 15s. 6d., and the total amount of sales was nearly 9,000l. The speakers on the occasion were the Revs. W. Tyler, Dr. Leat-r, of Norwood, Dr. Ferguson, Mr. Clarke, of Canada, J. Bigwood, and J. Baker, of Lambeth. One of the resolutions referred to the success which had attended some of the society's publications, especially the large-type edition of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," and the new periodical known as the "Mothers' Treasury." It alluded further to a recent resolution of the committee to assist Sunday-schools in poorer districts with a library of books to the value of 3l. for 30s.

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